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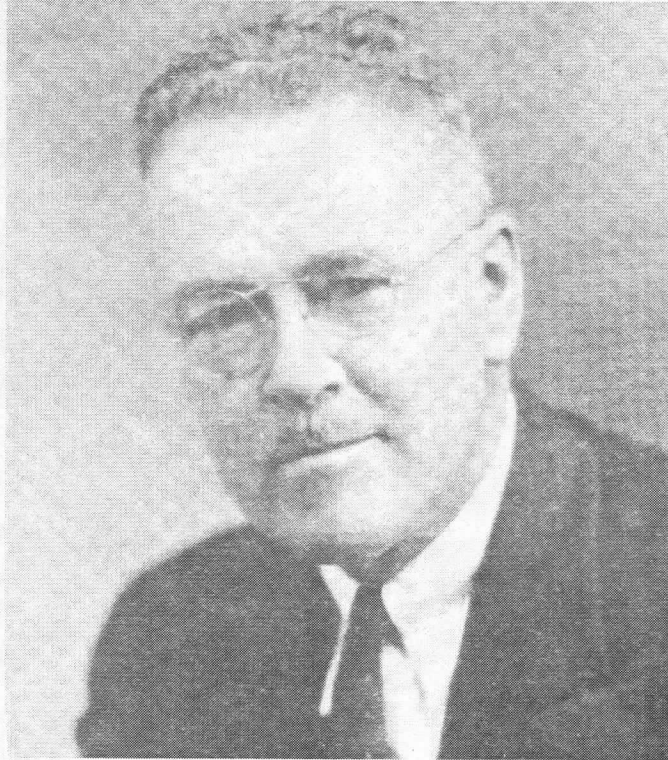
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# Prof Mac: Iowa's Forester

Harold S. McNabb, Jr.  
Emeritus University Professor



*Professor G.B. MacDonald, 1936*

When Joe Herring received the 2003 Xi Sigma Pi - G. B. MacDonald Senior Award in April, many of those present at the Wild Game Banquet probably had slight knowledge of Professor MacDonald's achievements during the development of Iowa's and the university's forestry programs. Hopefully, this brief note will help.

I first met Prof Mac, as he was affectionately known, as a 10-year-old boy in June 1938. He was visiting Lincoln, Nebraska, headquarters for the famous Forest Service Shelterbelt Project that stretched from North Dakota to Texas. My uncle, a forester on this project, visited our home with Prof Mac. My interest in woody plants began with these conversations and it became one of the foundations of a most rewarding professional career. Prof Mac's interest in trees and their place in the landscape of the agricultural middle west and Great Plains was contagious. I caught his enthusiasm and have never lost it! When I met Prof Mac next in the summer of 1947, I was a Forest Service District Dispatcher on the Kaniksu National Forest on special assignment as an instructor in fire fighting at Priest Lake, Idaho. Iowa State Forestry Summer Camp was being held at Priest lake, and Prof Mac was department-head, serving as camp director. When I joined the faculty at Iowa State, in February 1953, Prof Mac was still a professor in the department, teaching part-time, as well as the State Forester of Iowa.

Gilmour Beyers MacDonald was born March 9, 1883 in Carleton, Nebraska, where his father was a Presbyterian minister. After a series of moves, the family settled in Lincoln in 1887. Gilmour graduated from Lincoln High School, entered the University of Nebraska majoring in forestry, and received his B.S. in 1907. During high school and college, he was active in basketball, football, and track (pole vaulting). After working for the U.S. Forest Service in Wyoming and Montana, he returned to the University of Nebraska for graduate studies in forestry, receiving his M.S. in 1910. In 1947, his Alma Mater awarded him the honorary

Prof Mac was one of the giants in the conservation movement in Iowa and in the advancement of forestry

Doctor of Agriculture degree upon him. He passed away on October 13, 1960. G. B. MacDonald had temporary teaching responsibilities at Iowa State College during the spring of 1910 and returned in August of that year to a permanent position becoming the leader and head of the growing curriculum of forestry in the Department of Horticulture and Forestry. He held this position until July 1, 1948, the last two years being Head of the newly created, separate Department of Forestry. On campus, he was elected a member of Alpha Zeta, Gamma Sigma Delta, and Cardinal Key honor organizations.

education in the United States. He worked tirelessly for the wise-use and care of Iowa's natural resources, strongly supporting the Iowa Conservation Commission, now the Department of Natural Resources. He organized and directed the State Civilian Conservation Corps program, 1934-1938. He planned and developed the State Forest Nursery at Ames. He was a Fellow of the Society of American Foresters, and a member of its Council. He received the American Forestry Association's Award for Distinguished Service in Education. At the 100th Anniversary celebration of Iowa State College, in 1958, he received the honor of the Distinguished Service Award.

G. B. MacDonald's interests in the Ames community were as fruitful as his professional life. He was a lifetime elder in the Collegiate Presbyterian church where he founded the first Boy Scout troop in west Ames in 1912 and continued in Scouting for 45 years. He served on the Ames City Council for 28 years, was a member of the Rotary for 38 years, and was associated with the College YMCA for 50 years. He helped develop much of the residential area south of the campus.

When I began college in the fall of 1945 at the University of Nebraska, as a Botany/Chemistry major, I had planned to transfer to Iowa State after two years for forestry because of Prof Mac's earlier influence. I did not transfer because I was offered an undergraduate teaching assistantship as a sophomore at Nebraska, and had found my future wife of 53 years. At that time, my department chair, Prof. Raymond J. Pool, who had been at the University of Nebraska at the time of their dropping of the forestry curriculum, told me the following: "Iowa State has maintained their forestry education because of one reason, Professor G. B. MacDonald. His strength and persistence were the difference."

In closing, I would like to direct those who have further interest in the history of forestry at Iowa State to the 1954, 1961, and 1979 editions of the Ames Forester.



*Professor Mac at Univ. of Nebraska, 1906*



*Prof. Mac & Mrs. Mac relax at home, circa 1936*